

# HMS Recreational Compliance Guide

Guide for Complying with the Atlantic  
Billfishes, Swordfish, Sharks, and Tunas  
Regulations



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Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division



## Introduction to Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management

Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS), including tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfish, are managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) under the authority of the Secretary of Commerce, with consideration of the domestic and international aspects of these fisheries.

The 2006 *Consolidated Atlantic HMS Fishery Management Plan* (FMP) was developed for the integrated management of HMS within the Atlantic Ocean, which includes the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. Consistent with the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and its amendments, NOAA Fisheries recently updated and amended several regulations. Regulatory changes in this version of the guide include, *but are not limited to*, the following sections:

- VI. Effective March 15, 2016, smoothhound sharks (smooth dogfish, Florida smoothhound, and Gulf smoothhound) are now federally managed. An HMS Angling permit is required for targeting and retaining smoothhound sharks.**
- VIII. Correction:** Charter/Headboat permit holders that also hold a limited access Swordfish Handgear permit are **not** authorized to sell swordfish on a for-hire trip. Recreational retention limits apply.
- III. HMS Angling or HMS Charter/Headboat permit:** The “trophy” bluefin tuna (fish >73”) quota has been divided into three geographic areas thereby allowing trophy bluefin tuna caught incidentally while targeting other species in the Gulf of Mexico to be retained, provided the subquota is available at the time of harvest.
- VI. HMS Angling or HMS Charter/Headboat permits:** must report all recreational bluefin tuna landings as well as dead discards to NMFS within 24 hours online at <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov>, or by phone at (888) 872-8862.

This guide is intended to provide a plain language summary of how to comply with the regulations for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfishes. It amends all previous guides and complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

Fishery rules change frequently. Check <http://go.usa.gov/3qjTV> to be sure you have the most recent version of this guide. It is ***your responsibility*** to become familiar with the latest regulatory updates and to comply with the current official regulations. For a comprehensive list of updated Atlantic HMS regulations, please refer to the electronic Code of Federal Regulations (<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov>). **If there is a discrepancy between this document and the regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations, the regulations take precedence.**

**Endnotes** (<sup>1,2,3</sup>, etc.) are in the final chapter of this guide and refer to the

locations of the regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) (Title 50, Wildlife and Fisheries). In the electronic version of this guide, citations are to the electronic version of the Code of Federal Regulations. Clicking the hyperlinks in the endnote text in the final chapter will open your internet browser to the section containing the regulation in the CFR.

All Atlantic HMS that are caught but not kept must be released immediately to improve their chances of survival without removing them from the water.<sup>1</sup> A careful handling and release brochure is available on the Atlantic HMS website: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/guides/careful\\_release\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/guides/careful_release_brochure.pdf). This brochure outlines fishing techniques and gear modifications that can be used to increase the survival of HMS.

For updates on **Atlantic tunas**, such as bluefin tuna quota monitoring or retention limits, visit <http://hmspermits.noaa.gov> or call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862. For more detailed information on tunas, contact the HMS Management Division located in Gloucester, Massachusetts at (978) 281-9260.

Additional information on HMS management is available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or by phone at (301) 427-8503. To stay up-to-date with HMS regulations, sign up for *Atlantic HMS News* at [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/news/news\\_list/index.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/news/news_list/index.html).



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